

1 - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

At a crossroads, Suffolk County moves decisively on its future

Your participation in shaping the future of Suffolk County is essential to maintaining the high quality of life we enjoy. The choices we make in how and where we decide to grow in the next twenty years will dictate where we live, how we travel to work, the safety of our drinking water, the quality of our schools, and the quality of life for future generations.

This document is the first volume of the *Suffolk County Comprehensive Master Plan 2035*, a two-year update of the County's master plan. It has been prepared to provide an initial set of data to interpret and analyze when setting goals towards 2035. The data sets provided represent the initial tools required to initiate a county-wide conversation about the future of Suffolk County.

It is critical for the public and policy makers to work cooperatively towards mapping out a future for Suffolk County which is achievable, sustainable, and resilient in the midst of a changing and challenging economy. Working together, we can accomplish the goals we set in order to meet our collective vision of the future.

OVERVIEW & PROCESS

A comprehensive plan is a statement of policies directed to the long range protection, enhancement, growth, and development of the county. The Suffolk County Comprehensive Master Plan 2035 process provides an opportunity for an examination of a broad range

of issues facing the County now and into the future. Some of the items examined in this process will include:

- ♦ population, demographic and socio-economic trends;
- ♦ existing and proposed land uses;
- ♦ existing and future needs for housing, commercial, and industrial facilities;
- ♦ the adequacy and needs of transportation and other infrastructure; and
- ♦ the protection of the environment as well as the needs for open space and parkland.

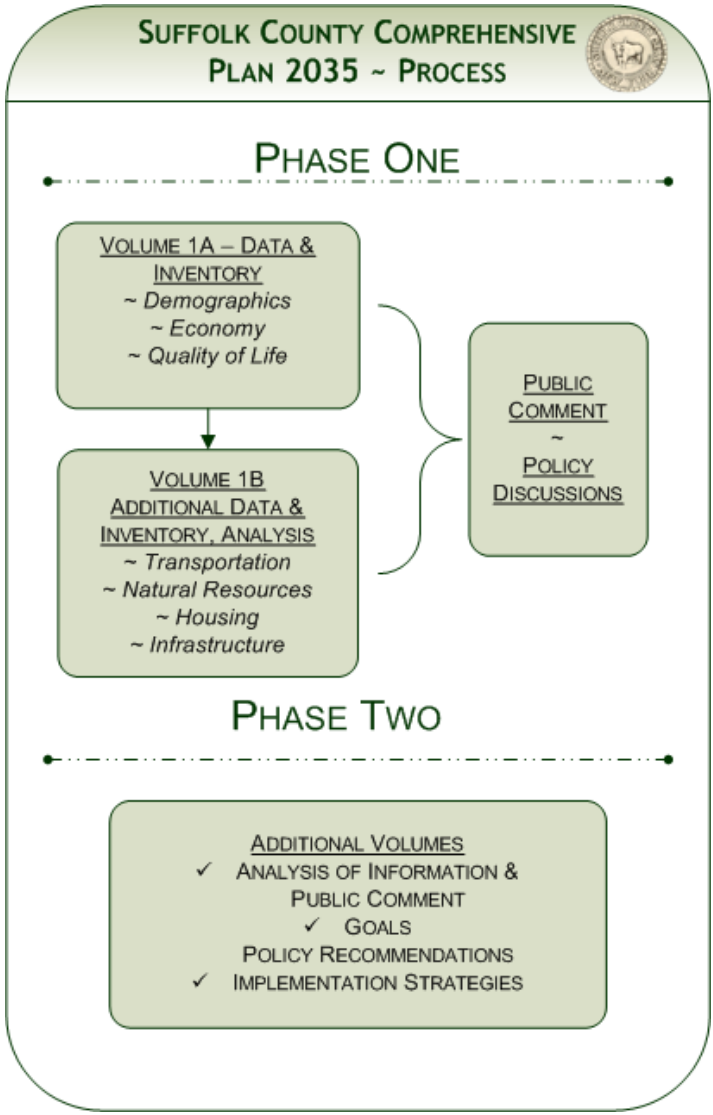
To ensure that the plan is coordinated with other levels of government, the process will involve close coordination with each of the 10 towns and 33 villages in the County. In addition, the plan will be coordinated with the efforts of the Long Island Regional Planning Council and the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council.

The Suffolk County Comprehensive Plan 2035 will be prepared in two phases:

- ♦ **Phase One** will contain several reports providing background and inventory information about the current state of the County, including vital information across a broad range of issues affecting the environment, economy, and other considerations of quality of life. This information will form the foundation on which the plan will be developed.
- ♦ The first volumes will contain inventory data subdivided into several categories, including demographics, the economy, quality

of life, transportation, natural resources, housing, and infrastructure.

- ♦ **Phase Two** will analyze the information gathered in Phase One, to provide analysis, policy recommendations, and implementation strategies.



Over the next several months, we will be gathering input regarding the data provided, additional information required and goals towards 2035. *We look forward to hearing your thoughts about the future of Suffolk County and stand ready to provide the resources and technical expertise required to assure a successful Suffolk County Comprehensive Master Plan 2035.*

PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY

Comprehensive planning in Suffolk County has been occurring since the 1970s following the dramatic population explosion in the 1950s and 1960s. The regional plan completed by the Nassau-Suffolk Regional Planning Board in the early 1970s was the first comprehensive study of its kind and became a landmark study for the region. It was followed by many topic-specific studies including influential works in groundwater protection, farmland preservation, and open space planning. In all, several dozen studies were completed, many of which created the foundation for important programs and policies that have greatly benefited the residents of Suffolk County.

The content, preparation, adoption, and amendment of the County's Comprehensive Plan are guided by General Municipal Law (GML) and the Suffolk County Code (Code). The preparation of Suffolk County's Comprehensive Plan 2035 is in compliance with all applicable laws, rules and regulations¹. The County Planning Commission has identified six "critical county-wide priorities" that will impact the future: environmental protection, economic development, housing diversity, transportation, energy, and public safety. Suffolk's challenges are interconnected, requiring a comprehensive strategy and plan to address them.

¹Please see Appendix C for a detailed accounting of all relevant laws, rules and regulations governing the master plan process.

OVERVIEW ~ SUFFOLK COUNTY: YESTERDAY, TODAY, & TOMORROW

Suffolk County was a prototypical example of suburban expansion in the 1950s and 1960s as the County's population tripled in one generation (Please refer to **Chart 1-1**). The western portions of Suffolk County were transformed from rural communities into a dense grid of subdivisions and shopping centers, permanently changing the original landscape.

This expansion did not occur in accordance with an overall plan but was instead a reaction to population and development trends that were national in scope. These included the enormous phenomena of

the "baby boom"; rising family income, especially for middle income households; and improved personal mobility via the automobile.

Town and village zoning laws reinforced this pattern of land development with single-family uses and strip commercial zoning along major road corridors. The households that populated Suffolk County at this time were very homogenous in terms of family size, composition, transportation use, and color.

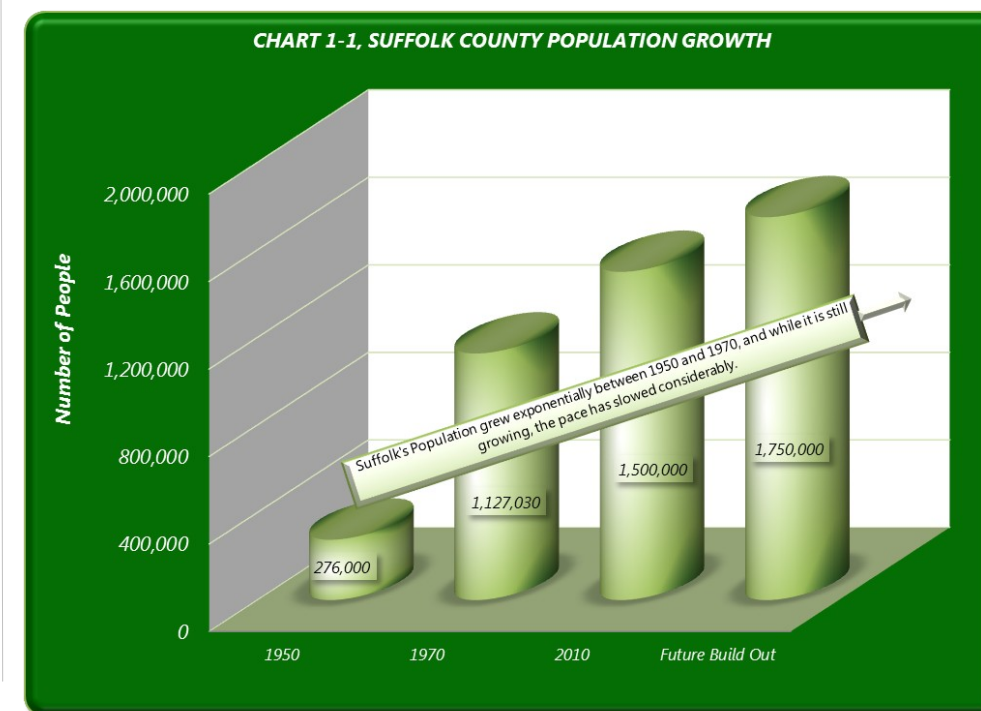
This arrangement provided most residents with a high quality of life, including good schools, and recreation opportunities. However, not all residents have had access to these benefits.

The generation that settled post-war Suffolk County advanced into middle age, children headed to college or jobs, women entered the workforce, the household acquired a second or third car, and aging grandparents moved out from points west to be close to family. By 1980 the non-nuclear family in Suffolk County became the majority household, dominated by single persons, single parent head of households, empty nesters, and other household types. The period of rapid suburban expansion of this type had ended.

Key findings include:

- ◆ Today, the County's population continues to grow, but not as quickly as in previous decades. Suffolk's population is 1.5 million, the largest of any county in New York State except the boroughs of New York City. Suffolk County has a larger population than 11 U.S. States².

²US Census Bureau



- ◆ While the County’s population is still growing at a modest rate, we are approaching saturation based on the limited amount of land remaining available for development. The County’s population may increase by about 17% when all remaining land available for development is developed and some land is redeveloped, topping out at approximately 1.75 million people³.
- ◆ Today, the County is approaching 85% build-out and is reaching the maturation stage of its development history.
- ◆ As the County approaches saturation, a number of important planning issues will be raised, all dealing with how we will live, work, and transport ourselves in the future.

Consider the issues impacting Suffolk County’s future:

These questions below clearly do not have easy answers, yet they form the foundation for the type of critical thinking, policy evaluation, and public debate that will guide the planning process as Suffolk looks ahead to 2035.

³ Source: Suffolk County Department of Planning

◆ <u>Tax and Governance ISSUES:</u>
✓ Are there any government functions that strike you as either spectacularly successful or in desperate need of improvement?
✓ Looking ahead, what are the challenges governments in Suffolk County will face?
✓ Given the tax structure and revenue flows outlined in this plan, are there ways government can pay for existing and future services that are more fair, efficient, or less burdensome?
✓ What should be the primary objectives and goals of the various government entities in Suffolk County, as you see it?

◆ <u>INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES:</u>
✓ Will our existing wastewater and transportation infrastructure accommodate future growth while protecting our drinking water, bays and beaches, and air quality?
✓ Where should future development occur? Where should we preserve in the future?
✓ How will we maintain and improve mobility?
✓ How many people will use public transit?
✓ How much will this help in limiting the future growth of traffic congestion?
✓ What are the costs and risks of being part of an island that is dependent upon a regional transportation system that is already highly congested and, some contend, vulnerable?
✓ How will the aging population in the suburbs impact future infrastructure needs?

◆ <u>HOUSING ISSUES:</u>
✓ Where should future residents live?
✓ What housing types should be constructed?
✓ What should be the relative proportions of each type of housing?
✓ Should accessory apartments or other types of rental housing be encouraged? How should they be regulated?

◆ <u>ECONOMIC ISSUES:</u>
✓ Where will the population work and what will they do?
✓ What is the economy of the future that will best serve the residents of Suffolk County?
✓ What population level and what pattern of land development and public expenditure structure is sustainable?

◆ <u>ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES</u>
✓ What will be the condition of the environment if current land use patterns remain unchanged?
✓ What will be the impact of future development on the environment?
✓ What steps need to be taken now to ensure a healthy environment in the future?
✓ What is the impact of sea-level rise in Suffolk County and what does that mean for future development along the coastline?

◆ <u>SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES</u>
✓ How do we make sure that the benefits and burdens associated with living in Suffolk County are fairly distributed across the population?
✓ Should the County seek to encourage a higher or lower saturation population?

This volume specifically explores the population, economic, and quality of life issues that impact the future of Suffolk County. The following pages highlight the information presented in Volume 1A of the Comprehensive Plan.

SUFFOLK COUNTY’S CHANGING POPULATION: OLDER, MORE DIVERSE, & SMALLER FAMILIES

We are becoming more diverse, older, and not growing in population like we did in the 1960s and 1970s.

An understanding of the characteristics of an area’s residents – and the projections of future population – is essential information in the development of plans, proposals, and policies to guide the most efficient arrangement of land uses and the proper utilization of resources within Suffolk County. Changes to age group and household composition have a significant impact on the use of Suffolk’s resources now and looking forward to 2035. The population growth rate and changes in its composition have considerable impacts on the labor force, housing demand, consumption demand, and government expenditures.

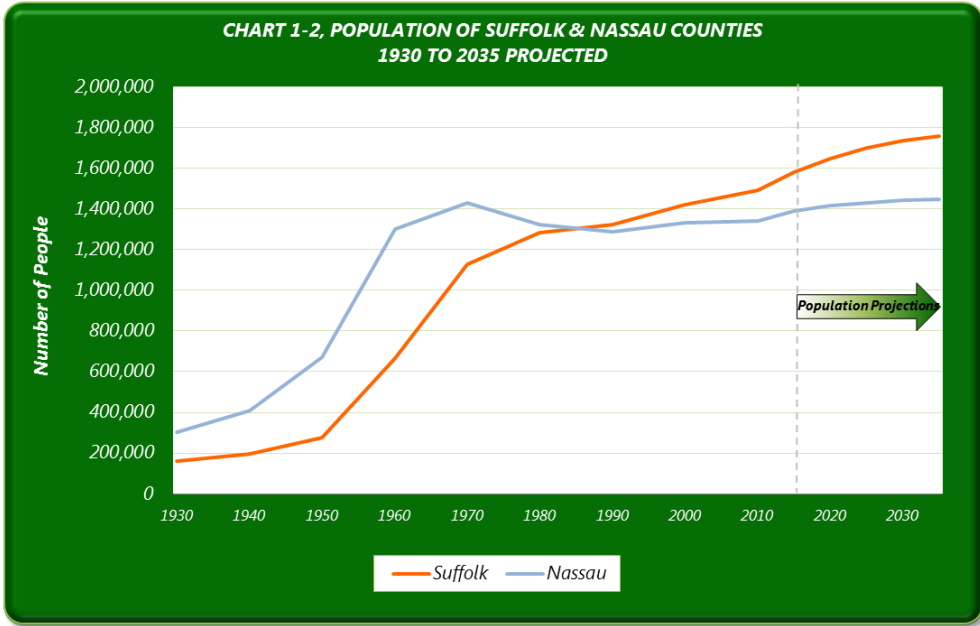
The 2010 U. S. Census revealed that Suffolk County’s population was 1,493,350. This figure represents an increase of 5.2% since 2000, after increases of 7% in the 1990s and 3% in the 1980s. Suffolk County ranked 21st in population out of all 3,141 counties in the United States, and was larger in population than 11 U. S. states.

Chart 1-2 displays the population growth trends in both Nassau and Suffolk Counties since 1930. The graph exhibits the explosive growth that both counties experienced between 1950 and 1970. While

Nassau’s population declined in the 1970s and 1980s, it has since increased modestly. In the 1980s, Suffolk County surpassed Nassau County in population. Suffolk’s population has grown moderately in each decade since 1970.

Suffolk County’s population is projected to continue to increase slowly for the next 25 years. Based on current trends and a gradual reduction in the amount of vacant land available for residential development, Suffolk County’s population is projected to increase by 240,000 or 16% between 2010 and 2035. Some of this projected increase is expected to come from redevelopment. Because Nassau County has significantly less land available for development, Nassau is expected to increase in population by 98,000 or 7% between 2010 and 2035, mostly because of redevelopment.

The largest numerical increase in population is expected in the Town of Brookhaven with an addition of 108,000 persons.



SNAPSHOT

SUFFOLK POPULATION DENSITY:
1,639 PERSONS PER SQUARE MILE

91% of population is in the 5 western towns (62% of the County's land area.)	Western Suffolk density is 2,403 persons per sq. mile, while eastern Suffolk's density is 395 persons per sq. mile	Suffolk has a lower density than Nassau (4,672), Westchester (2,193), Queens (20,240) & Manhattan (69,071)
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Suffolk County’s population density varies widely

Based on the 2010 U. S. Census results, Suffolk County’s population density was 1,639 persons per square mile. Yet Suffolk’s ten towns vary greatly in population size and density. The 2010 population density in western Suffolk was 2,403 persons per square mile, and in eastern Suffolk the density was 395 persons per square mile.

- ◆ The five western towns, Huntington, Babylon, Smithtown, Islip, and Brookhaven, contain 91% of the County’s population but just 62% of its land area.
- ◆ While Suffolk’s population density has been increasing, it is still significantly less than neighboring counties. Although Suffolk has more people than Nassau County, Suffolk is only about one-third as densely populated as Nassau.

Suffolk County’s population is aging in place

Because of its development history, Suffolk County has an interesting age composition. As its population began to grow exponentially in

the 1950s and 1960s, Suffolk County had relatively more pre-school and elementary school children (age 0-14) and more adults in their early middle years (age 30-49) than might have been expected had the age distribution more closely resembled that of the entire U. S.. This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that so much of Suffolk’s housing at that time (much of it new single family homes) was occupied by young families with children. At that same time, Suffolk had fewer older children and young adults (age 15-24), fewer adults in their older middle years, and fewer elderly persons than the U. S. as a whole.

By 1970, these phenomena were demonstrated in the census statistics of that year. The population in Suffolk County was noticeably younger than the population in the U. S. as a whole. The percentage of population in the age groups 0-4, 5-9 and 10-14 was noticeably larger in Suffolk County than in the U. S. as a whole. The proportion aged 20-24 in Suffolk County was noticeably smaller than the U. S. as a whole, and the percentage of those in the age groups 35-39 and 40-44, (the age of young parents, and likely relatively new Suffolk residents) was higher in Suffolk County than in the U. S. as a whole. In Suffolk County, the percentage of persons in many of the older age groups was smaller than the U. S. as a whole.

The reason for these differences in age composition between Suffolk County and the U. S. was that so much of Suffolk County’s housing was developed in a relatively short time. A tremendous number of new residents, many of whom were young couples starting families, moved to Suffolk County in the 1950s and 1960s. The County had a tremendous influx of similarly aged people, with similarly aged children, during this period.

By 2008, Suffolk County’s age structure was more similar to the U. S. as a whole. This change has occurred as the County has aged

demographically and some people have aged in place, while others have migrated out or into the County, in addition to the natural occurrences of births and deaths.

- ◆ In the 1970s and 1980s, the birth rate in Suffolk County dropped to levels significantly below the birth rates in the U. S. as a whole. This change contributed to the relatively low percentage of persons in the 20-24, 25-29, and 30-34 age groups by 2008.
- ◆ The median age of Suffolk County’s population in 2010 was 39.8 years (up from 36.5 years in 2000).
- ◆ The 2010 census revealed that 45,000 or 23% of the County’s seniors (age 65 and over) live alone, and that 29% of Suffolk County households contain a senior citizen. These figures are even more striking in the five eastern Suffolk towns: 19% of the population is age 65 or over and 35% of all households contain a senior citizen.

Suffolk County has fewer school children now than in 2000

The school-age population consists of persons age 5-17. After the baby boom, Suffolk County’s public school enrollment declined more than one-third from a peak of 331,000 in 1976 to 214,000 in 1990. These declines led to the closing of over 70 schools in Suffolk County.

- ◆ In the 1990s, the population age 5-17 increased by 15% and public school enrollment in Suffolk County increased every year between 1991 and 2004, but has decreased each year since 2004.
- ◆ Public school enrollment in the fall of 2010 was 252,000 in Suffolk County, far below the levels of the 1970s. The number of children

- age 5-17 increased by only 2,000 or 1% between 2000 and 2010.
- ◆ However, the population age 5-17 in Suffolk County is expected to slowly decrease for the next several years as the smaller populations currently in the 0-4 age group age into this demographic.

Suffolk County has smaller households now

The average household size in Suffolk County and in the US as a whole has decreased significantly in recent decades. As of 2010, the average household size in Suffolk County was 2.93 persons per household. The average household size in Suffolk peaked at 3.74 in 1967.

Household sizes declined significantly in the 1970s as baby boomers moved out of their parents’ homes, average family size became smaller, and more people lived alone. Average household size in Suffolk County was 3.04 by 1990. In 2000 the average household size in Suffolk County was 2.96 people, and has been relatively stable since then.

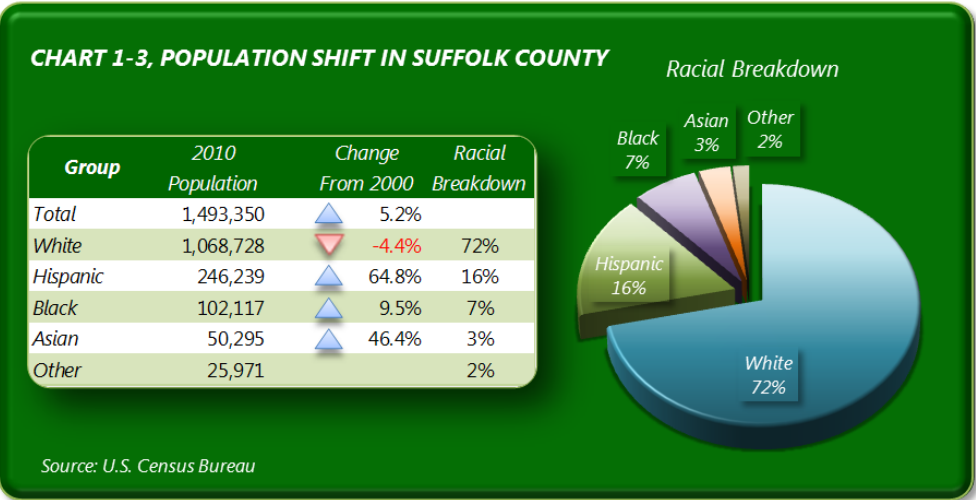
New housing developments tend to contain younger families and larger household sizes. As an area’s residents and housing mature (as is the case in Suffolk County), household size tends to decrease. This is especially true as development approaches saturation conditions and little new housing is built. Eventually, larger numbers of young households replace the older households and the household size stops declining or even increases slightly, which is now beginning to happen in Suffolk County. A stable or very slowly increasing household size is expected in the coming years.

Key findings include:

- ◆ As of 2010, the average household size in Suffolk County was 2.93 persons per household. The average household size in Suffolk peaked at 3.74 in 1967.
- ◆ In Suffolk County, the percentage of family households has decreased since 1980. In 2010, family households accounted for 74% of all households in Suffolk County, down from 84% in 1980. The one category of family households responsible for this decline has been married couples with children under age 18. In 1980 this category accounted for 43% of all households in the County, but that number was 27% in 2010. The most common household type in Suffolk County in 2010 was married couples with no children under age 18, comprising 31% of all households.
- ◆ In Suffolk County, the number of one person households increased from 52,754 in 1980 to 102,900 in 2010, a 95% increase. In 2010, 21% of all households were single person households, up from 14% in 1980 and just 9% in 1970.
- ◆ Nearly half of the County’s one person households are persons age 65 and over, and much of the growth in the one person households is attributable to our aging population, in addition to social trends such as delayed marriage, persons remaining single, and the incidence of divorce. The percentage of one person households has increased in Suffolk County in recent decades to 21% in 2010.

Suffolk County continues to become more racially diverse

Suffolk’s population has become more diverse in the last ten years, with growth in the Hispanic, black and Asian populations: Please see **Chart 1-3**.



- ◆ In 2010, non-Hispanic Whites made up 72% of the Suffolk’s population and decreased by a 4% percentage points over the last decade.
- ◆ The Hispanic population, representing Suffolk’s largest minority group, increased by 65% between 2000 and 2010.
- ◆ The foreign born population has risen significantly, representing 13% of the population.

Between 2000 and 2010, the non-Hispanic White population declined by 4%, while the Black population rose 9%, the Hispanic population increased by 65%, and the Asian population grew by

46%. Between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population also increased by the largest raw number, rising by 96,000 people. These trends are expected to continue.

As a point of comparison, in 1980, Suffolk was 89% White, 5% Hispanic, 5% Black, and 1% Asian. The White population percentage in Suffolk County remains higher than the U. S. as a whole, and Suffolk’s Asian, Black, and Hispanic percentages are slightly below the national figures, despite dramatic growth in the number of Hispanics in Suffolk.

Poverty

In a relatively high cost area such as Suffolk County, poverty can be easily understated because the thresholds are based on a national standard. In 2009, 5% of the population (78,000 people) in Suffolk was living in poverty⁴. In Suffolk County, the poverty rate for children was higher than for the overall population. In 2009, more than 23,000 or 6.5% of persons under age 18 in Suffolk County lived in poverty as defined by the Census Bureau. Please see **Table 1-1** for an analysis of Suffolk County’s economically distressed communities.

The changing face of the suburbs will have housing, infrastructure, education, environmental, economic, and healthcare implications.

Economy

In order for Suffolk County to continue to prosper economically, a

⁴ The poverty income threshold is \$22,050 for a family of four and \$10,830 for an individual, US Census Bureau.

TABLE 1-1, SUFFOLK COUNTY COMMUNITIES WITH HIGHEST ECONOMIC DISTRESS, 2005-2009							
Community	% With Public Assistance	% High School Graduates	% Below Poverty Level	Median Household Income (2009 dollars)	% Unemployed	Median Home Value	Overall Rank
Wyandanch	7.3%	71.7%	18.5%	\$51,493	9.2%	\$298,300	1
Riverhead	4.0%	81.8%	12.8%	\$53,443	11.1%	\$353,000	2
Riverside	2.5%	80.4%	8.3%	\$34,577	15.5%	\$83,500	3
North Amityville	3.0%	74.4%	10.8%	\$58,620	7.8%	\$347,000	4
Mastic Beach	4.1%	79.3%	14.6%	\$60,625	6.2%	\$270,600	5
North Bay Shore	5.4%	68.4%	8.2%	\$69,583	9.5%	\$357,000	6
Central Islip	3.2%	75.8%	7.8%	\$70,117	8.6%	\$330,400	7
Brentwood	2.8%	69.8%	8.0%	\$68,109	7.1%	\$348,400	8
Mastic	1.8%	82.9%	13.5%	\$72,008	6.6%	\$307,300	9
Gordon Heights	3.7%	91.4%	9.3%	\$63,380	14.0%	\$287,700	10

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

solid base of timely factual information about the state of our economy is essential.

The Long Island region has shown an acute ability to adapt to changing economic conditions

Although once dominated by manufacturing jobs, the County’s employment base has diversified in recent decades and now includes major employers across the spectrum of service and goods-producing industries. Please see **Table 1-2**.

- ◆ Its gross metropolitan product, the total output of goods and services produced, was estimated to be \$138.6 billion in 2008. This figure places Nassau-Suffolk in the top 20 metropolitan areas in the nation. The region’s economic output also exceeds that of many countries. Suffolk County has a skilled, well-educated workforce.
- ◆ According to the U. S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, the total personal income of Suffolk County residents amounted to \$73.9 billion in 2009. The County’s 2009 per capita personal income was \$48,691, ranking 6th highest out of the 62 counties in New York State and was 23% higher than the national average.
- ◆ According to the U. S. Census Bureau, the 2009 median household income in the County was \$83,620, making it the 25th highest (in the top 1%) out of all counties in the nation and placing it 67% higher than the median household income in the nation as a whole. The County’s average annual pay in 2009 amounted to

TABLE 1-2, LONG ISLAND'S CHANGING ECONOMY									
Sector	2010			2001			2001 vs 2010 (% Change)		
	Total Employment	%	Total Annual Wages (\$000s)	Total Employment	%	Total Annual Wages (\$000s)	Total Employment	Total Annual Wages	Average Weekly Wage
Total All Sectors	602,363		\$31,090,271	581,938		22,524,443	3.5	38.0	33.5
Total Private Sector	495,594	82.3	\$24,590,636	483,899	83.2	18,064,044	2.4	36.1	32.9
Total Public Sector (Fed, State, Loc)	106,770	17.7	\$6,499,635	98,039	16.8	4,460,399	8.9	45.7	30.9
Goods Producing	88,987	14.8	5,152,031	99,911	17.2	4,313,201	-10.9	19.4	34.1
Natural Resources and Mining	2,467	0.4	91,788	2,625	0.5	77,335	-6.0	18.7	26.3
Construction	33,496	5.6	1,889,239	34,676	6.0	1,492,961	-3.4	26.5	31.0
Manufacturing	53,024	8.8	3,171,004	62,611	10.8	2,742,904	-15.3	15.6	36.6
Service Providing	406,607	67.5	19,438,605	383,988	66.0	13,750,843	5.9	41.4	33.4
Trade, Transport, Utilities	128,479	21.3	5,471,556	128,645	22.1	4,314,338	-0.1	26.8	27.0
Information	9,859	1.6	619,358	15,420	2.6	852,448	-36.1	-27.3	13.6
Financial	28,663	4.8	3,174,877	28,559	4.9	1,973,996	0.4	60.8	60.3
Professional and Bus. Services	78,319	13.0	4,498,559	75,604	13.0	3,033,897	3.6	49.8	44.6
Education/Health Care (private)	90,447	15.0	4,028,237	73,901	12.7	2,433,009	22.4	65.6	35.2
Leisure and Hospitality	47,943	8.0	988,164	39,296	6.8	645,515	22.0	53.1	25.3
Other Services	21,002	3.5	590,244	20,913	3.6	484,653	0.4	21.8	21.1
Unclassified	1,895	0.3		1,650	0.3	42,987	14.8	-100.0	36.9
Federal Government	12,494	2.1	846,509	11,654	2.0	507,910	7.2	66.7	55.5
State Government	17,222	2.9	825,936	18,302	3.1	858,841	-5.9	-3.8	2.2
Local Government	77,054	12.8	4,827,190	68,083	11.7	3,093,648	13.2	56.0	37.9

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

*Includes: School districts, special districts, town, village and county government.

SNAPSHOT
EMPLOYMENT

The unemployment rate in February 2011 was 8.2%; by 3Q, it was 9.2%

Employment growth has occurred in education and health services, leisure & hospitality.

The largest job losses have occurred in government, construction & manufacturing.

\$49,963 and ranked in the top 4% of all counties in the nation.

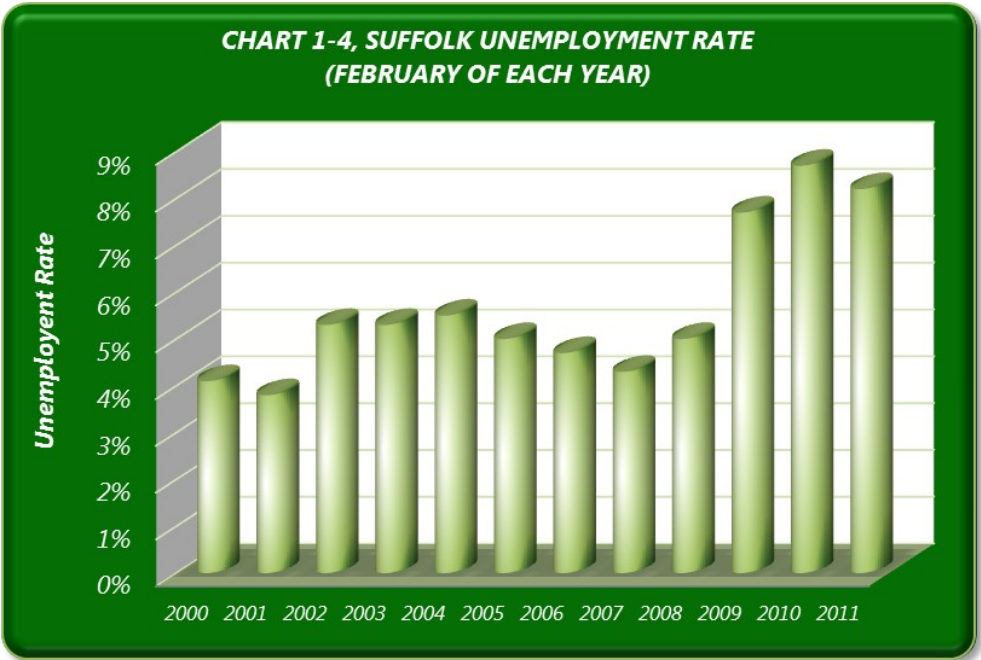
Long Island has a large and diverse economy

- ♦ Eastern Suffolk County is a major tourist and second-home destination, with one of the largest concentrations of second homes of any county in the United States. There are approximately 37,000 second homes in eastern Suffolk, which draw approximately 150,000 part-time residents with large purchasing power to the area during the summer and on weekends.
- ♦ According to the US Department of Agriculture, the value of agricultural production in Suffolk County was \$243 million in 2007, the highest of any county in New York State. Suffolk is the State’s top producer of greenhouse, floriculture, nursery, sod. Suffolk is also the State’s top aquaculture (the fresh and salt water farming of fish) producer.

Economic recovery is slow and unpredictable

- ♦ In 2008, employment growth in the Nassau-Suffolk region turned somewhat negative in an unfavorable national economic climate. The region lost jobs between September 2008 and April 2010. Please refer to **Chart 1-4**.
- ♦ Job growth was maintained a consistent level but consistent between June 2010 and April 2011, but was slightly negative in May and June 2011. The number of jobs on Long Island

decreased by 6,800 or 0.5% between June 2010 and June 2011. In comparison, jobs in New York State increased by 0.5% in the same period and nationwide, jobs increased by 0.8% in the same period.



- ♦ Between June 2010 and June 2011, the largest employment growth in Nassau-Suffolk occurred in education & health services (an increase of 3,000 jobs, up 1.3%) and wholesale trade (an increase of 1,700 jobs, up 2.5%). The largest job losses occurred in government (-5,400, down 2.5%) and manufacturing (-1,800 jobs, down 2.4%).
- ♦ However, total non-farm employment in February 2011 was 1.2 million, an increase of 7,900 jobs (up 0.6%) since February 2010. Between March 2010 and March 2011, the largest employment

growth occurred in education & health services (an increase of 6,500 jobs, up 2.9%), and leisure & hospitality (an increase of 3,400 jobs, or 3.7%). The categories wholesale trade, professional & business services, other services, transportation, and retail trade also posted small increases in employment. The largest job losses occurred in government (-2,300 or -1.1%), construction (-1,300 or -2.3%) and manufacturing (-1,300 or -1.8%). The unemployment rate in the County was 8.2% in February 2011, an improvement from the 2010 figure but higher than any February figure between 1993 and 2009.

- ♦ Suffolk County contains more than 24 million square feet of non-government office buildings. There was a decline in the demand for office space on Long Island starting in 2009. At that time, vacancy rates began to increase and rental rates began to decrease. In the past year, the market has stabilized but has not improved. According to CB Richard Ellis, the office vacancy rate in Suffolk County was 20.1% in the 1st quarter of 2011, 0.4 percentage points higher than one year previous and 2 percentage points higher than in the 1st quarter of 2009.
- ♦ Suffolk County contains more than 24 million square feet of non-government office buildings. There was a decline in the demand for office space on Long Island starting in 2009. At that time, vacancy rates began to increase and rental rates began to decrease. In the past year, the market has stabilized but has not improved. According to CB Richard Ellis, the office vacancy rate in Suffolk County was 20.1% in the 1st quarter of 2011, 0.4 percentage points higher than one year previous and 2 percentage points higher than in the 1st quarter of 2009.

Revenue from sales tax, a major revenue for Suffolk County, is low

Suffolk County’s portion of the sales tax had remained at 4.25% since 2001 (New York State’s portion is 4%). An MTA surcharge of 0.375% is also added, for a total sales tax of 8.625%.

- ◆ Sales tax revenue has increased in all but three of the most recent 14 years.
- ◆ The worst performing of the most recent 14 years was fiscal year 2009 (April 1, 2008 – March 31, 2009) when Suffolk County’s sales tax revenue decreased by 2.2%.
- ◆ A major source of government revenue for Suffolk County, sales tax revenue in 2010 was up 5.7% from 2009.
- ◆ Sales receipts in the first quarter of 2011 (\$508 million) show a slight improvement from the first quarter in 2010 (\$496 million).

Small businesses have held steady

- ◆ Through 2010, the number of businesses located in Suffolk County has held fairly steady despite the recent recession. There were more than 49,000 business establishments with payroll in 2010 in Suffolk, an all-time high and a 4% increase since 2005. The largest numbers of businesses are in the construction category; followed by retail trade, professional & technical services, health care, and financial activities. Sixty-two percent of

Suffolk’s businesses employ fewer than five persons, and 78% of businesses in Suffolk employ fewer than 10 persons.

Industrial vacancy rates are low, third best in the nation

- ◆ Industrial square footage totals 92 million square feet in Suffolk County, nearly double the space in Nassau County. The industrial market on Long Island remains strong. As of the 1st quarter of 2011, the 5.7% industrial vacancy rate on Long Island was third best in the nation and is expected to remain strong. The industrial vacancy rate has increased only slightly in the past year.

Downtowns remain strong

- ◆ Shopping centers in Suffolk County total 39.5 million square feet. This includes more than 5.6 million square feet of new shopping center space added since 2000. Suffolk County’s traditional downtown centers contain 8 million square feet of ground floor retail space. In shopping centers, the percentage of stores that were vacant increased to 12% in 2010. By comparison, in downtown areas, the vacancy rate was 11% in 2010.

QUALITY OF LIFE

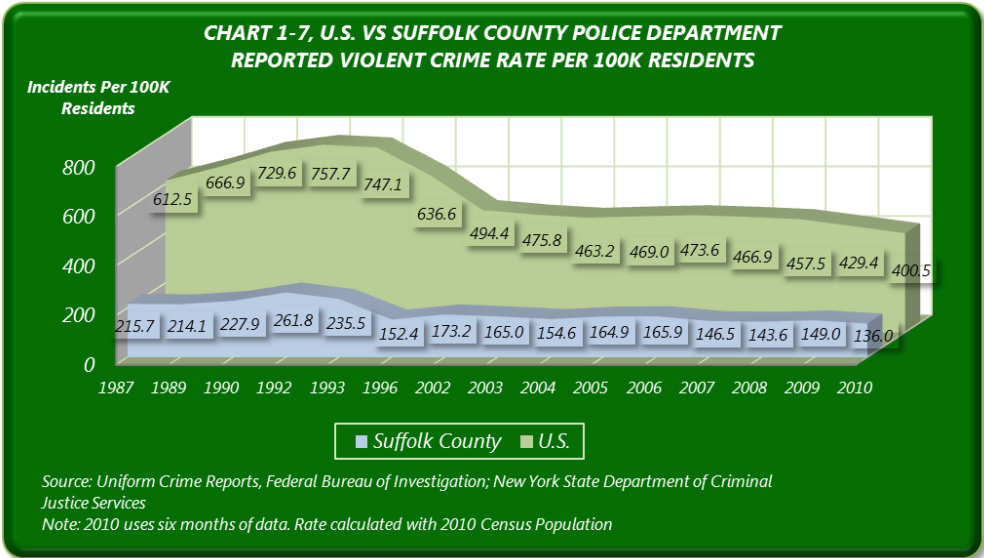
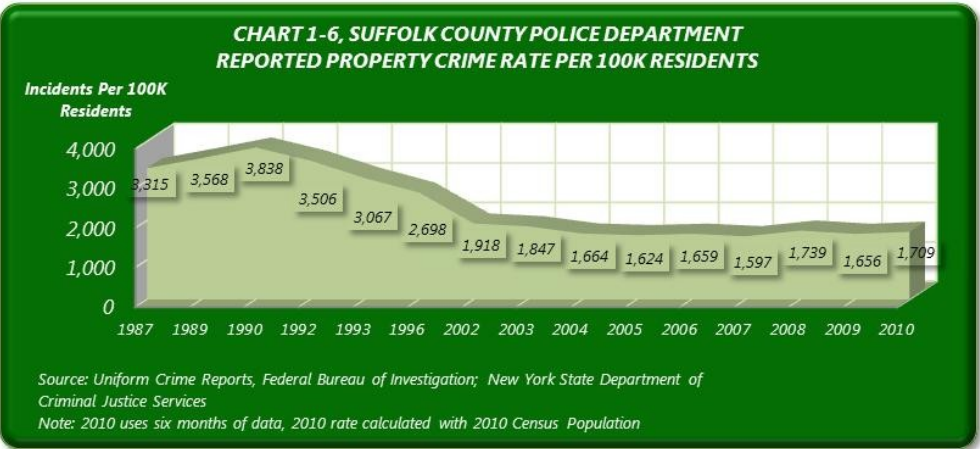
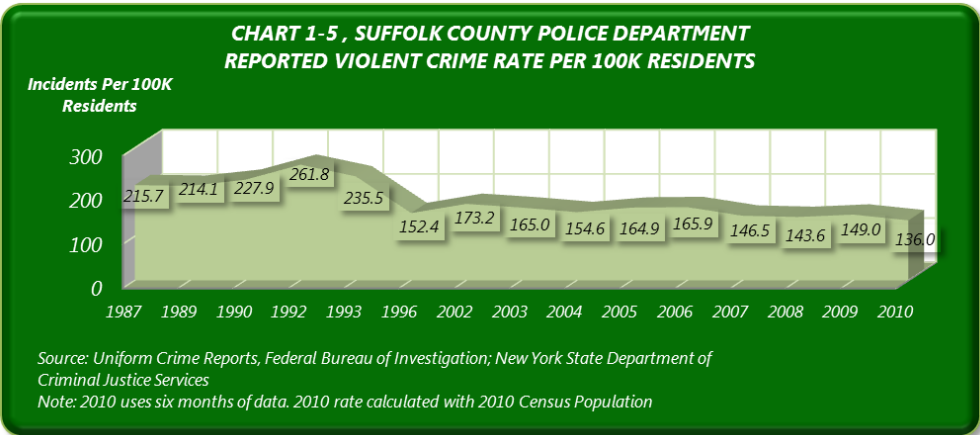
There are several problems related to measuring the quality of life in a region or community, most of them stemming from the opaque and subjective nature of any human attempt to measure how life is experienced by others. What constitutes a “high” quality of life is obviously not the same for everyone. Good schools might mean less to single adults than they do to families with children. Higher wages

might mean more to young workers than to retirees. Access to parks might mean more to middle-class hikers than to wealthy yacht owners. There were several indicators utilized in connection with the quality of life chapter.

Suffolk is relatively safe

Crime reported to the Suffolk county police department has declined markedly over the past twenty-five years.

- ◆ In 1987, the Suffolk Police reported a violent crime (e.g. murder, theft, rape) rate of 215.7 incidents per 100,000 residents. By 2010 that rate had fallen by 37 percent, to 136 incidents per 100,000 residents. Please see **Chart 1-5**.
- ◆ In 1987 Suffolk police reported a property crime rate of 3,315 incidents per 100,000 residents. By 2010 that rate had dropped by 48 percent to 1,709 incidents per 100,000 residents. Please see **Chart 1-6**.
- ◆ Suffolk’s crime rates remain well below the average for the nation, and have fallen further than the nation’s as a whole. The nation’s violent crime rate dropped 35 percent between 1987 and 2010 (from 612.5 per 100,000 residents to 400), compared to Suffolk’s rate drop of 37 percent. The nation’s property crime rate dropped by 41 percent (from 4,963 per 100,000 residents to 1,709 per 100,000 residents), compared to Suffolk’s drop of 48 percent. Please see **Chart 1-7**.
- ◆ Data compiled from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics and various state agencies for the year 2009 indicates that for violent crime Suffolk has the sixth lowest crime rate among fourteen



NEXT STEPS

We look forward to hearing your thoughts about the future of Suffolk County and stand ready to provide the resources and technical expertise required to assure a successful Suffolk County Comprehensive Master Plan 2035. Here are four things that you can do to participate in the process:

1. Sign up to receive Comprehensive Plan updates

Go to the following link to sign up to receive updates to the Comprehensive Plan:

http://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Home/departments/planning/ComprehensivePlan/SCCP_CommentsContact.aspx

2. Share this website with your friends

Forward this link http://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Home/departments/planning/ComprehensivePlan/SCCP_Home.aspx to your friends so that they can join in on this important conversation.

3. Host a conversation

Invite the staff of the Suffolk County Planning Department meeting to provide a 15-minute presentation of key Comprehensive Plan findings at an upcoming civic or business meeting. Email planning@suffolkcountyny.gov with the name of the group, two upcoming meeting dates and times in the future, and the number of members in the group. In the subject line of your email, please use Comprehensive Plan 2035.

4. Send in feedback

Please send us thoughts or ideas related to the Comprehensive Plan to planning@suffolkcountyny.gov. In the subject line of your email, please use Comprehensive Plan 2035. Tell us what you think Suffolk County should be in 2035, your thoughts and stories about what makes Suffolk County unique, and what additional information you would like to have in upcoming volumes.

comparable counties, with 180 violent crimes per 100,000 residents. Prince George’s County, MD, Barnstable County, MA, Westchester County, Middlesex County, MA, Macomb County, MI, Monmouth County, NJ, and Nassau County all had higher violent crime rates. Rockland County, Bergen County, NJ, Montgomery County, PA, DuPage County, IL, and Fairfax, VA had lower violent crime rates.